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A SKETCH OF THE DUBOIS FAMILY, PIONEERS OF INDIANA AND ILLINOIS.

BY HELEN L. ALLEN.

"In the life of a nation ideas are not the only things of value. Sentiment also is of great value; and the way to foster sentiment in a people, and to develop it in the young, is to have a well-recorded past, and to be familiar with it."

As in fancy there unfolds a panorama of the progress of events which have played a part in the making of American history, a thrill of patriotism sweeps the on-looker at the sight of certain scenes and faces made familiar through the annals of fact and fiction chronicled by the passing years.

While some points stand out in bold relief, others, more in the shadow perhaps and less easily recognized, are nevertheless essential to the general representation, and others even more obscure—merging into the background—aid in giving to the whole its proper tone.

Gradually the well known features fade from view and the canvas portrays an unbroken wilderness. Along the banks of its streams stand the stately sycamores and birches, the walnuts, maples, elms, oaks, beeches and giant tulip trees, while the willows bow their heads across the waters.

Flying from the treetops, hiding in their branches, or skimming o'er the water are seen the woodpeckers, blue jays, wild pigeons, turkeys, geese and ducks, as well as gulls, cranes, swans, terns, and the cormorant and spoon-bill, while from the hillsides swoop the bald and golden eagles.

Lurking in the shadows, peering from their caverns, are foxes, black bears, wolves and panthers, the wild hog and

lynx, with the red deer and buffaloes adding to the general wildness.

Not a white man visible, but gliding through the forests, balancing in birch canoes, hunting game, or smoking about the camp fire are many different tribes of red man.

Surely no artist could desire a more fitting background for the portrayal of pioneer hardihood in the march of civilization to the "far west" of those early days,—in reality, a portion of the "middle west," narrowing even to the confines of the present County of Dubois in southwestern Indiana.

Continuously unrolling, the picture brings the beginning of changes in this "forest primeval" as the clock of the ages strikes A. D. 1801.

Up from Kentucky, following the "Buffalo Trace"—that wide path beaten from time almost immemorial by the tread of many thousands of buffaloes, and which affords an entrance to this then practically unexplored region—the sturdy Scot, William McDonald and his wife, Jane B. McDonald are answering "the call of the wild."

Proceeding warily, they come to the present site of Boone Township and here they halt and make the first permanent white settlement at what is now Sherritt's Graveyard, in Dubois County. Meeting bravely the hardships of that primitive life, these hardy McDonalds and the other white settlers following shortly over the same trail, soon wrest from Nature homes and sustenance, build Fort McDonald for common defense from the Indians, and with characteristic self-reliance, courage and patriotism, add interesting chapters to the general history of the nation in the development of the country's resources and the preservation of the Union.

"History itself is nothing more than legend and romance" and "every form of human life is romantic."

From out this background, prepared by Nature with such lavish hand, stand certain figures whose influence in the many vicissitudes attendant upon the settlement of a new country and the growth of its people has been most marked.

These men, commanding respect and confidence because proving themselves worthy of it, demonstrate that after all "Biography is the only true history."

At this time interest is directed to one person—not widely recognized perhaps at this date—whose strong personality dominated succeeding events to such an extent as to excite wonder and to create a desire for a clearer understanding of the position occupied by him in the conduct of affairs of the Middle West.

His name is TOUSSAINT du BOIS (Tusang du Bwa), or as it has become Anglicized "Toussant Dubois," and he was a native of France.

It is generally conceded amongst genealogists and historians that the name "du Bois" is of feudal origin, and one of the oldest, if not the most ancient, patronymic descending unchanged to the present time. In the royal library at Paris, certain records trace lines of descent from Geoffroi du Bois, a knight banneret under William the Conqueror; some writers trace this family to Macquaire du Bois, Count de Roussy in 1110, whose ancestor built the Castle de Roussy in 948 and added this title to his patronymic. This castle was situated in Artois, France, where many suppose the name "du Bois" to have originated, although some trace the origin to Normandy, and still other evidence points to its having been an old name in Neustria before the time of Rollo or Hrolf (born probably in 860 and dying in 932), Norwegian Viking and first Duke of Normandy.

"Surnames originally designated occupation, estate, place of residence, or some particular thing or event that related to the person." Some writers mention the family of du Bois as "Grand Masters of the Forests of France," "du" being the French contraction "of the" and "bois" meaning wood.

While all ancient families of this surname are believed to have a common origin, yet genealogies cannot be traced with certainty beyond the time of Louis XIV, because of the destruction, following his order, of protestant family

records, particularly those in any way allied to a noble family and in a line of succession to the estate.

For instance, the registers at Wicres, near Lisle, now in the Province of Artois, France, are mutilated in the place where evidently was once written the Christian names of the eldest sons of one Chretien du Bois. But surnames were first assumed as distinctive marks of nobility in the eleventh century, and one writer says that "all family surnames which can be traced prior to the 13th century are of noble origin," while another says "All ancient du Bois families who were entitled by nobiliary right to spell their name with a capital B have a common origin to the 11th century." It must be remembered too that in feudal times, the surname could not belong to two families without the addition of an agnomen, of which there are many examples in France and Belgium.

With the erasure of names from the baptismal and genealogical registers and the confiscation of land and goods, there naturally followed the expatriation of the Huguenots or French Protestants, many of whom drifted to America, and amongst them different branches, both Protestant and Catholic, of the du Bois Family. Some settled in the far east, particularly in the Valley of the Hudson, while others stopped first in Canada and afterwards, following the fortunes of war, became residents of the Thirteen Colonies, or, in the zeal of exploration and the founding of new homes, became in truth pioneers of civilization, as in the case of the subject of this sketch, Toussaint du Bois.

Many gaps and a general cloudiness as to detail are manifest in the passing picture as one endeavors to trace authentically the early life of this man. The bulk of evidence, however, seems to indicate that Jean Baptiste du Bois, his wife Euphrayse, and three sons, Francois, Joseph and Toussaint, departed from France at the same time, prior to 1740, doubtless intending to take up their abode in New France or Canada, largely peopled at that time by the French.

From Lower Canada it was natural, in learning from the

French missionaries and trappers of the wide domain beyond the border, to follow the water courses which eventually brought them into the vast region from which were ultimately carved the great States of the Middle West,—Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana.

The seat of the Empire of France in the Ohio Valley was for many years the trading post and fort "on the banks of the Wabash," known as "The Post," but later called "Vincenne," in honor of the post commander, Francis Morgan de Vincenne, who met death at the hands of the Indians. With "Vincenne," or as anglicized "Vincennes," as a starting point, many settlements were made by the French in this vicinity, including those first found in Lawrence County, now in the State of Illinois. Under the French rule, settlers received allotments of land and titles thereto from the French Commandants of Vincennes, and here, along the bluffs of the Oubache (Wabash) River, above the old ferry landing, Jean Baptiste—himself a French Commandant—located on "Dubois Hill." While the Oubache River marked the boundary line in 1809 of Indiana Territory, later "Dubois Hill," on its western shore was included in the grant of land forming the State of Illinois. Casting in their lot with this new country, du Bois and his sons proved themselves ever ready to defend, succor and advance its best interests, and the changing conditions of this section plainly showed the great need of loyal faithful service from those finding here a shelter and a home.

Blurred by reason of the lapse of years, it is difficult to distinguish all the threads of history weaving at this time about the du Bois Family. Through the mist, one sees but faintly Toussaint du Bois and his two brothers threading their way to Canada, there setting sail for their native land, perhaps to search for family records, to seek the restoration of confiscated property, to interest friends and relatives in the richness of the Colonies, or, mayhap, to renew some old love suit, perchance to wed the sweetheart of youth for the helpmeet of maturer years in that "New

World," whose hold is so strong as to draw them back for further testing of its fortunes.

Success crowns determined persistent effort and Toussaint du Bois, through his diplomacy, keen foresight, and knowledge of men and affairs, soon occupied an enviable position of trust and wealth. Giving particular attention to trading with the Indians, learning their habits, likes and dislikes, he soon acquired a powerful influence over them and was enabled to adjust wisely the many difficulties arising between them and the whites incident to frontier life.

An enterprising merchant, he established stores in Vincennes, Kaskaskia, and Cahokia, having associated with him Pierre Menard and Francis Vigo, the former a partner for sixteen years. Transacting a large business for that period, he accumulated a vast estate, including much land in Illinois and Indiana.

On one of the "Dubois Hills,"—the bluffs along the river,—is seen the old "Family Mansion," whose material it had taken months at least to bring up the river by bateaux from New Orleans. Built of native rough stone, with clapboard roof and dormer windows, this two story structure was indeed an imposing edifice among the large number of humbler dwellings of the populace of that region.

A passing glance at the interior of this home revealed the artistic nature of the French, in the arrangement of rooms and furniture,—many exquisite pieces of the latter, as well as some of the massive old silver on display, having accompanied these people from their home beyond the sea.

While Toussaint Dubois is recognized in Vincennes as an important and influential citizen, yet in his home it was the gracious presence of Madame Dubois, which, like a sweet perfume, manifested itself from the quaint portico with its wealth of vines and roses, beyond into the garden with its riot of old fashioned flowers, even to the boulangerie, with its huge fire place hung with cranes and its great oven, from which the savoury haunch of venison and other toothsome viands were carried by the panis (Indian slaves) to the dining room for the delectation of family and guests.

A most estimable character is Janne Bonneau du Bois, who presided with so much grace over this home, and who, at the early age of twenty-eight, left husband and children (four sons and one daughter) so desolate when Death called her beyond.

On the stone which marks her resting place in the Roman Catholic Cemetery, at the rear of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral at Vincennes, is found this inscription:

Here lies the body of
JANNE BONEAU
The wife of Toussaint Dubois
Who departed this life
the 15th November, 1800
Aged 28 years.

In the records of the cathedral itself, there is the following glowing tribute to this noble woman:

On the 16th day of November, 1800, was buried in the cemetery of this parish (St. Francis Xavier, Vincennes, Ind.), the body of Jeannette Bonneau, wife of Toussaint Dubois, who died on the preceding day, as a true Christian, mourned by the young and old people, being loved and esteemed by them, on account of her charity, her beneficence, her good disposition, and other precious traits of character.

The whole village assisted at her funeral, and few there were who did not shed tears. The burial service was interrupted two or three times, a testimony to her virtue, which we make mention of in the parish records, thinking it a proper thing to do.

Vincennes, this 16th day of November, 1800.

J. FR. RIVET, Mission.

Some time later, Toussaint Dubois wooed and married Miss Jane Baird, a Protestant, residing near Bloomington, Indiana, and to this union three sons were born: Thomas, James and Jesse Kilgore Dubois.

In quick succession, one secures glimpses of the changes

about Vincennes. In 1763 the British took possession, but paid little attention to the acquisition until 1777, when Lieutenant Governor Abbott, of Detroit, arrived and changed the name of the place to Fort Sackville, his followers incited the Indians to attacks on the whites under French rule or in rebellion to Great Britain.

The protection of the country from these disastrous attacks became a momentous issue and George Rogers Clark, of Kentucky, rose to the occasion as a leader of the people.

The physically strong and the fearless have their place in the picture, but permeating the clouds of discord, unrest and bitter struggle like a pure breath from the virgin forests is the benign influence, the strong faith, the untiring zeal, the firm hold for good, emanating from that rarely sweet, yet forceful character, who knew and loved these people—both French and Indian—Father Gibault. This quiet retiring spirit wielded a most potent influence upon the events of this time, for it is he who secured for Clark the good will and services of the French at Vincennes and Kaskaskia.

In these troublesome times, it was to the home of Jean Baptiste Dubois that Father Gibault wended his way to discuss the weighty matters of state now confronting the colonists. Here, after serious debate, it was agreed that both Jean Baptiste Dubois and his son Toussaint Dubois, shall be the first the next day to take the oath of allegiance to the American cause.

At the little log church, flooded with sunshine on this memorable July morning, the simple service proceeded with pious solemnity, the benediction was pronounced, and then in earnest tones Father Gibault urged the allegiance of his people to this new republic. As he held his missal aloft, the two Dubois—Jean Baptiste and Toussaint—stepped forward and took the oath, the people then pressed forward to follow their example.

Indomitable courage, bloodshed, victory,—these words seem to tell the story of the next few years, when George

Rogers Clark, his Virginians, and the devoted French of the Ohio Valley saved to the Union "The Key to the Northwest,"—Vincennes, on the banks of the Wabash,—that historic city, the scene of many heroic deeds, which brought the great mid-west to the Union and made the Louisiana purchase a possibility.

Palpitating with the excitement of approaching warfare, a gradual change of attitude is revealed on the part of the once friendly tribes of red men, now brought more and more under the malignant influence of "The Prophet"—unscrupulous brother of Tecumseh—the main instigator of hostilities between the Indians and the settlers.

From the settlement of these Chiefs on Tippecanoe Creek, near the present city of Lafayette, Indiana, the depredations of the savages multiplied rapidly and crowded closer and closer to Vincennes, alarming the people, retarding the further improvement of the western Indiana Territory, and having the encouragement of the British in Lower Canada.

Toussaint Dubois—because of his intimate knowledge of Indian affairs—was one of the confidential messengers chosen by General William Henry Harrison, then Governor of the Territory of Indiana, to visit the different tribes and warn them against maintaining the attitude of hostility incited by "The Prophet" and the British traders, but at the same time he carried assurances of the desire for friendship on the part of the government and offers of its protection.

During one interview in 1810, Dubois pressed "The Prophet" to state his grounds for complaint against the United States and was told that "the Indians have been cheated out of their lands, that no sale is good unless made by all the tribes, that he had settled near the mouth of the Tippecanoe by order of the Great Spirit, and that he is likewise ordered to assemble as many Indians as he can collect at this place."

All attempts toward a friendly solution of the difficulties proved futile. Prompt measures were necessary. The organization of an army at Vincennes followed. Toussaint

offered his services at this crisis and was given the rank of Captain, with charge of the spies and guides. Having traversed many times the country from Vincennes along the Wabash to Detroit, he was eminently fitted for a leader in this campaign.

The cautious march beginning September 26, 1811, from Vincennes; the stop at two o'clock in the afternoon of November 6th a mile and a half from "The Prophet's Town" while Captain Dubois went forward with a flag of truce for conference; the refusal of the Indians to hear him and the attempt to prevent his return; the deception practiced upon General Harrison by messengers from "The Prophet;" the march forward in order of battle and encampment for the night; the furious early morning assault November 7th, the hours of desperate fighting which followed, and the ultimate defeat of the Indians, all pass in rapid review.

Captain Dubois, the last white man to visit the headstrong "Prophet," and his two older sons, Toussaint Dubois, Jr., and Henry Dubois, Privates, show indomitable courage in this greatest military engagement ever fought on Indiana soil, this "Battle of Tippecanoe—the precursor of the War of 1812,—and "On September 26, 1822, Captain Dubois was commissioned Major commandant of all the spies in Indiana."

Again upon the canvas is seen the region opened up for settlement by the intrepid McDonalds and in their home in 1817 a meeting of the commissioners appointed by the Legislature to select a site for the seat of justice in County of Dubois, created on December 20th of that year, and named in honor of the civil and military services rendered the State and Union by Toussaint Dubois.

Within its present boundaries—for the original picture shows it to be of far greater area—Toussaint Dubois was the first white man to purchase land there, entering on May 7, 1807, the north half of Section 3, Township 1 South, Range 5 West, in Boone Township,—across which extends the famous "Buffalo Trace," by means of which the first white

settlers penetrated this forest gloom, and where is found also the noted "Toussaint Dubois Spring" with its strong flow of unexcelled pure water. The patent—a quaint looking document, yellow with age—covering this land purchase, reads as follows:

Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States of America:

To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting:

Know ye, That Toussaint Dubois, of Vincennes, having deposited in the Treasury a certificate of the Register of the Land Office, at Vincennes, whereby it appears that he has made full payment for the north-east quarter of section number three, of township number one (South of the Basis line) in range number five (West of the Second Meridian) of the lands directed to be sold at Vincennes by the act of Congress, entitled "An act providing for the sale of Lands of the United States in the Territory northwest of the Ohio, and above the mouth of Kentucky river," and of the acts amendatory of the same, THERE IS GRANTED, by the United States, unto the said Toussaint Dubois, the quarter lot or section of land above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said quarter lot or section of land, with the appurtenances, unto the said Toussaint Dubois, his heirs and assigns forever.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have caused these letters to be made PATENT, and the seal of the United States to be hereunto affixed. Given

SEAL OF THE under my hand at the City of Washington, the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the thirty-third.

By the President.

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

JAMES MADISON, Sec'y of State.

In depicting any period, one spirit hovers ever near, changing the course of all events, for no-one may withstand the hand of Death. To each his appointed time, and on March 11, 1816, the waters of the Little Wabash in Clay County, Illinois, not far from Vincennes, closed over the soldier and citizen, Toussaint Dubois.

On his way from visiting Pierre Menard at their store in Kaskaskia, with saddle bags heavily loaded, and accompanied by a negro slave, Dubois attempted to ford this stream recently swollen by heavy rains, but the under-current was too swift and he sank to rise no more.

The "Western Sun" on March 16, 1816, contains this notice:

"On Monday last, in attempting to cross the Little Wabash River, was drowned Major Toussaint Dubois. In him, the poor have lost a benefactor, his country a friend. He was a kind husband, an indulgent father and an honest man."

Nobility of character is strongly emphasized in the life of Toussaint Dubois. His untiring services in the early days of this country toward the colonization of the whites and the civilization of the Indians entitle him to a prominent place on the Honor Roll of the Nation, while his own State of Indiana—the scene of his heroic work—should consider it a duty and a privilege to proclaim his deeds to succeeding generations through the erection of suitable monuments and tablets to his memory,—particularly in the county created after his death which bears his name.

The mantle of the father often enwraps to some extent at least the son, and a glance at the passing years brings into view Major Toussaint Dubois' youngest son, Jesse Kilgore Dubois,—the warm personal friend and confidential advisor of Abraham Lincoln.

First seeing light, January 11, 1811, in the luxurious home of the Dubois overlooking the Wabash—the year in which his father, Capt. Toussaint Dubois, was winning renown in the Tippecanoe Campaign, Jesse Kilgore Dubois

grew to young manhood surrounded by the refinement of the Old French, the bravery of the frontiersman, and the patriotism of the defenders of the New Republic.

With the inherited desire of the pioneer for change and conquest, Jesse Kilgore Dubois early sought a new home amidst the rolling prairies of the present state of Illinois. He was a legislator from 1834 to 1844, voted for the removal of the capital from Vandalia to Springfield, was one of the first appointees of President William Henry Harrison as receiver of the land office at Palestine, having the same appointment from President Zachary Taylor; was elected county judge of Lawrence County, serving from 1853 to 1856; received the nomination and was elected state auditor on the first republican ticket, and was styled "The Nestor" of the War Cabinet of Governor Yates.

He exerted his influence in behalf of Grant, being made Colonel of the Twenty-First Regiment; his home became the political center of the State at which met statesmen from far and near, and he was member for Illinois of the National Executive Committee for the Northwest in the campaign of 1864.

When in attendance at the sessions of the Legislature at Springfield, Dubois lived in the home of James L. Lamb, whose daughter, Hannah, became the wife of General John M. Palmer, Governor of Illinois, from 1869 to 1873. On one of his trips, Dubois was accompanied by his cousin, Major Bowman of Virginia, who, meeting here another visitor, in the person of Mary Lamb, a cousin of the family, without delay fell in love with her, and proceeded to court and marry her.

Lincoln writes of this member of the Dubois Family, "My acquaintance first began with him in 1836. He was a member from Lawrence and Coles. Our friendship has continued and strengthened. When I first saw him he was a slim handsome young man, with auburn hair and sky-blue eyes, with the elegant manners of a Frenchman, from which nation he had his descent."

And again during his candidacy for the presidency,

Lincoln, in introducing Dubois to a friend writes: "You may safely confide in him and in all he would advise you to confide in."

While attending Asbury University, Jesse Kilgore Dubois married Nancy Batterton, of Kentucky, who at her death a few years later was placed by the side of their children in the American Catholic Cemetery at Vincennes, although her husband had, through the early training of his Scotch mother—Jane Baird Dubois—been reared a Protestant.

Jesse Kilgore Dubois accumulated a large estate in central Illinois, some of the property being within the present limits of Springfield—the Convent of the Sacred Heart, in the western part of that city being located on the Dubois land, and, in the same locality, the Dubois Public School, is a tribute to this early statesman of the Middle West.

In selecting his second wife, Dubois' choice fell upon Miss Delia Morris, of Lawrence County, who proved herself a most worthy helpmeet in the political and social life of her husband's later years, and side by side they lie in beautiful Oak Ridge Cemetery at Springfield, Illinois.

Many of the descendants of Jesse Kilgore Dubois are living, but again a haze envelops some of the panorama, for in these modern days, with the vast domain of the United States as well as the foreign countries so easy of access, it is difficult to correctly group the members of the different branches of any family, or, in fact, unless some particularly brilliant public service is rendered by an individual, to pay but little attention to the name.

In Crawford County, Illinois, near Vincennes, is recorded in 1845, the birth of a son bearing the name of the man so much admired by Jesse K. Dubois, and who later became his warm personal friend. Lincoln Dubois, a resident of the same city where lived the Great Emancipator when the Nation called him to its highest office, has in his possession a cane, cut from the wood found on the Lincoln birthplace in Kentucky, which was bequeathed him by the Martyred President.

In this same County, in 1851, was born another son of

Jesse Kilgore Dubois, by name Fred Toussaint Dubois. This young man graduated from Yale in 1872, and in 1875 became secretary of the board of Railroad and Warehouse Commissioners of Illinois. Possessing the inherent desire for locating in new fields, he engaged later in business in Idaho, was United States Marshal for four years, and represented his State as Senator in the Fiftieth and Fifty-First Congresses.

On the wall in Senator Fred Toussaint Dubois' home in Idaho there hangs an oil painting of Major Toussaint Dubois. Delicate of execution and probably the work of a French artist, this half length portrait of Major Dubois, in the prime of young manhood, presents a striking resemblance to Lafayette, Jefferson and Hamilton of the same period.

It would indeed seem strange if, in the capital city of Illinois, where lived the intimate friends Jesse Kilgore Dubois and Abraham Lincoln, there should not be at least one Dubois descendant.

The dissolving views show Susanne Dubois, daughter of Jesse Kilgore Dubois and Nancy Batterton Dubois, the wife of John B. Adams; they show also her last resting place in the old American and Catholic Cemetery at Vincennes, about fifty feet from the grave of Francis Vigo, whose history is closely interwoven with that of Toussaint Dubois in the early days of Indiana.

They show Susanne Dubois Adams' daughter, Agnes Harower Adams, the wife of Arthur Huntington, and their only child, Agnes Dubois Huntington, residing (1912) at Springfield, Illinois, and with them lives also Lincoln Dubois, the son of Jesse Kilgore Dubois.

In their home may be found the *escritoire* with its spindle legs, sliding panels and secret drawers full of old documents (some of them relating to the early history of the Territory of Indiana) which stood in the Dubois Home on the bluffs above the Wabash. Here, too, are the old mantel clock whose dial is marked "Paris," and the rosewood medicine case with its bottles of medicine as in the childhood of

Jesse Kilgore Dubois, and the sword and pistol used by Major Toussaint Dubois.

Faithful citizen, statesman, soldier, loyal in service to country and fellow man, this is the record of Toussaint Dubois, whose legacy to succeeding generations is without price: the illustrious example of a noble life.

“This is the true pride of ancestry. It is founded in the tenderness with which the child regards the father, and in the romance that time sheds upon history.”